



Doing Right by Kansas Kids

After six full years of delay, blame-shifting, and excuse-making, the Legislature's time is up. Now it's time to act. Lawmakers must finally meet the expectations of Kansas students and parents, as well as teachers and taxpayers, when it comes to providing a first-rate education to every child in every Kansas classroom.

Without question, the Legislature faces a real challenge, and I will work with lawmakers of both parties to facilitate the best possible response. But this means that when our legislators return to Topeka, they must be ready to engage each other and to work on behalf of all Kansas children.

We simply can't afford a legislative-judiciary tug-of-war to obscure the real need for the best possible schools to benefit every Kansas student. In fact, the key to a prosperous Kansas, with more and more good jobs, is a great educational system.

In the next three weeks, the Legislature has an historic opportunity to place Kansas schools on the path to comprehensive excellence. All students stand to benefit, if representatives and senators act responsibly and seriously in funding a first-class education for each Kansas student, whether for a second grader from Hays, a sixth grader from Ulysses or a senior from Olathe.

The Legislature should not, indeed must not, fail these children. What legislators did in July will affect Kansas schools and the Kansas economy for generations to come. I am pleased the Legislature passed a responsible school finance bill that directs education dollars straight into classrooms. The Legislature must guarantee that future funding focuses on teachers, tools, and technologies – the investments that will improve every school across the state.

This is not a time for politics as usual. Special sessions are rare in Kansas, and their track record is mixed. That's why the Legislature needs to consider every alternative in providing appropriate resources to all our schools.

Each Kansas lawmaker does represent one set of constituents, of course, but the Legislature as a whole must represent the best interests of the entire state. That's my job as well. I'm ready to work hard on behalf of all Kansas children, their parents, and their teachers. I fully expect every legislator to do the same.